



49 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330  
Telephone: (207) 622-3473 Fax: (207) 626-2968  
Website: [www.msmaweb.com](http://www.msmaweb.com)



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 833

## AN ACT TO EXPAND THE EARNED PAID LEAVE EXCEPTION

March 19, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and esteemed members of the Labor Committee, I am Steven Bailey, the executive director of the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Superintendents Association and the Maine School Boards Association in support of L.D. 833, An Act to Expand the Earned Paid Leave Exception.

Maine schools are proud to offer robust benefits for our educators and school staff, including substantial paid leave policies. In looking through a random sampling of districts' collective bargaining agreements, all offered at least 3 to 4 weeks of sick leave per year, plus several more days of personal leave. Sick leave also routinely rolls over and can accumulate up to 180 days for educators in some districts.

Superintendents and school boards believe these benefits are vital in ensuring that every staff member can take off work due to illness, use personal days when needed, and return to the classroom ready to provide the best education for their students. And importantly, these policies were negotiated in local collective bargaining agreements that balance the interests of educators, administrators, and local communities.

L.D. 833 recognizes that employers such as schools, which already provide substantial leave policies, should be exempted from the state's Earned Paid Leave law.

Several districts have also shared with us that as the state has added new leave policies in recent years, schools have been forced to hire more substitutes to keep up with increased absences. That has led to increased costs of tens of thousands of dollars in school budgets throughout the state.

More worrisome is that fewer students are getting instruction from a certified teacher each day. The National Bureau of Economic Research has found that increased teacher absenteeism has a meaningful negative impact on student academic outcomes. L.D. 833 would help to balance the scale and recognize the needs of both educators and schools.

Our members would also seek more clarity in this bill to more clearly define "paid leave." In **MRSA 26, §636. Family sick leave**, paid leave as defined is "limited to sick time, vacation time, compensatory time and leave that is provided as an aggregate amount for use at the discretion of the employee for any of these same purposes. "Paid leave" does not include paid short-term or long-term disability, catastrophic leave or similar types of benefits."

We believe that under this definition, school districts would be included in the expanded exception included in L.D. 833. We would ask that the definition be more clearly defined in statute to avoid any ambiguity.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.